

PARTNERING WITH THE STATE CMPS ON NOAA HABITAT RESTORATION INITIATIVES

NOAA Habitat Restoration Network

NOAA is in the process of developing an agency-wide Habitat Restoration Network. The purpose of the network is to function at a national and local level to promote grassroots efforts to restore habitat beneficial to NOAA trust resources, particularly coastal marine and anadromous fish habitat systems. NOAA staff from around the nation who work on habitat restoration activities, representing Sea Grant, National Marine Fisheries, and National Ocean Service, met in Baltimore on March 20-21, 2000 for the first workshop to discuss establishing the network. Several working groups were established, including Communication and Networking, Restoration Project Planning and Implementation, Data Management and Product Development, Partnership Development, Technical Skills Development, and Budget Initiatives. These working groups have been tasked with developing short-term, intermediate, and longer-term (e.g., future budget initiatives) activities that can be conducted on a national and/or regional basis. Goals include developing and implementing a plan to maintain personal interaction and oversight on each habitat restoration project by linking local technical experts with specific projects/sites; designing mechanisms to select and develop the best restoration project sites and projects using local knowledge; developing and implementing a plan to leverage available funding at a national and local level for grassroots habitat restoration projects; and developing plans to promote coordination between NOAA restoration-based programs, including web-based sharing of information and expertise and refining GIS capabilities to map and track projects and opportunities for restoration.

Stay tuned for more news on this initiative — Coastal Programs Division staff will be contacting state coastal management programs soon to invite them to participate as partners in the network; to provide their particular state, regional, and local knowledge and experience in working with grassroots level groups and habitat restoration initiatives.

Wetland Restoration Tracking

As a result of a key action in the Clean Water Action Plan to "establish an inter-agency tracking system that will more accurately account for wetland loss, restoration, creation, and enhancement," NOAA is participating in a federal interagency effort to implement set wetland restoration definitions and a tracking system for accurately accounting for wetland creation, restoration, and enhancement. The White House Wetlands Working Group has established a set of definitions of categories of wetlands conservation activities (i.e., establishment, restoration, enhancement, and protection/maintenance.) The key issue has been separating restoration into reestablishment (acreage gain) and rehabilitation (no acreage gain), and avoiding double-counting restoration activities. The other important set of definitions relates to the current condition of land, prior to wetland conservation activities. These include: wetlands--non-agricultural lands; wetlands--agricultural lands; uplands; deepwater habitat; former wetlands (and the subset prior converted wetlands); and degraded wetlands. NOAA has agreed to use these definitions and the tracking system for its own activities and is proposing to encourage state coastal programs through outreach/information sharing and other activities, such as the \$309 assessment and strategy process and developing state environmental indicators, to also use these definitions and tracking systems.

For more information on either of these Restoration Habitat Initiatives, contact:

Helen Farr
Coastal Management Specialist
NOAA/NOS/OCRM Coastal Programs Division
1305 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
301-713-3105 x 150
helen.farr@noaa.gov

NOAA / NOS OFFICE OF OCEAN AND COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT, COASTAL PROGRAMS DIVISION
1305 EAST-WEST HIGHWAY, SILVER SPRING, MD 20910
301-713-3098 WWW.OCRM.NOS.NOAA.GOV

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